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ABSTRACT

The efforts of the University of Nebraska to build a new educational program based on community service are described. NOVA combined traditional instruction with a year-long field experience for undergraduate students in Nebraska communities. Emphasis was on problems related to poverty. The planning phase of the project is reviewed, along with an administrative overview and faculty perceptions of the program. Student volunteers are also described. Positive assessments were offered by both students and faculty, but the program was terminated June 30, 1974. Recommendations for future similar programs particularly devoted to human service are offered. It is suggested that experiential programs be staffed by an interdisciplinary faculty working as teams, not as minidepartments, and that some regular, nontraditional instruction be incorporated into the experiential program. The most significant outcome of NOVA is seen as a new realization of the strength, resourcefulness and ability of university students. (LBH)

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NOVA

A Community Service / Education Experiment

at the

University of Nebraska

Gene Harding

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH,
EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF
EDUCATION

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The University of Nebraska - Lincoln

April, 1974

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Preface

This report is an examination of the efforts of the University of Nebraska to build a new educational program based on community service. NOVA combined traditional instruction with a year-long field experience for undergraduate students in Nebraska communities; the emphasis was on problems related to poverty.

I was the Lincoln campus director of NOVA during the planning phase and the first year of the program. My analysis relates only to that experience, not to activities during the final two years nor to NOVA on the other two University of Nebraska campuses.

NOVA was a rich learning experience for me. Hopefully, some of my learnings — and newly acquired biases — will be useful to other educators embarking on similar ventures.

GENE HARDING
April 20, 1974

The Planning Phase

"NOVA—a star which suddenly increases its light and energy output tremendously, and then sinks to its former relative obscurity."

This definition, as it turned out, is a capsulated history of an intense effort to establish a social service experimental education program at the University of Nebraska. NOVA (Nebraska Opportunities for Volunteers in Action) began officially, July 1, 1971. It is to end June 30, 1974.

Suddenness was certainly a characteristic of the beginning of this experiment. One University administrator termed NOVA a "political accident." It was an unexpected outcome of U.S. President Richard Nixon's visit to Lincoln on January 14, 1971, when, according to Chancellor D. B. Varner, he "annointed" the UNL football team as "Number One" in the nation. During his address to 7,000 students, President Nixon announced that he was forming a new volunteer agency that would merge nine existing organizations, including Peace Corps and VISTA. The new agency, ACTION, would "give young Americans an expanded opportunity for the service they want to give . . ."

Chancellor Varner suggested that Nebraska would be a good place to initiate a new program that combined community service with collegiate education. President Nixon concurred, and planning began on each of the three Nebraska campuses—Lincoln, Omaha, and the Medical Center.

The next five months were frenzied. Federal administrators who were to assume leadership of ACTION when it came to life July 1 wanted a new program to mark the event. Nebraska's NOVA was to be a prototype for a nation-wide program called the University Year in Action (UYA).

On the Lincoln campus Peter Magrath, then dean of faculties, was assigned planning responsibility. Magrath assembled a planning

group of faculty, students and community representatives to hammer out the Lincoln campus proposal. This group consulted with other state officials, with students and faculty and with similar planning groups on the other two campuses.

Planning was marked by strong expressions of concern that none of the participants in the activity be exploited. Students must have adequate support in the field, the quality of education must be sustained, and people in Nebraska communities must not be "used" for the sake of an educational program.

By June 1, the following document had been developed for submission to ACTION:

NEBRASKA ORGANIZATION FOR VOLUNTEER ACTION

NGVA

... A cooperative federal-university program for volunteer service to low income and community groups by college students receiving college credit ...

The University of Nebraska proposes a cooperative effort with ACTION to develop positive new ways of working to limit poverty and its effects by harnessing the untapped potential of college students. A special opportunity to strike against economic and social privation, while simultaneously improving the quality of life in our communities, exists because of two interrelated developments.

The first development, which sets the broad organizational stage, is the reorganization of many federal volunteer agencies into ACTION. By bringing together the Peace Corps, VISTA, and other volunteer programs into the new ACTION agency, the federal government is moving to unify a variety of previously uncoordinated efforts into a stronger and more efficient organization. This new organization, by combining resources and experiences from the earlier programs, provides an exciting — and timely — base for expanding and improving the American principle of volunteer service.

It is a timely reorganization because of the second development, which reflects certain fundamental changes occurring on the nation's campuses. There is a growing recognition of the fact, reinforced by such national studies as the Carnegie Commission's *Less Time-More Options* and the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare's *Report on Higher Education* (known as the "Newman Report"), that American higher education must adapt itself to new social condi-

tions by becoming more efficient and more innovative in its teaching and learning programs: students do not learn only in classrooms, and the educational house should be one with many doors and windows into learning experiences. At the same time we are all equally aware that many college youth are increasingly restless, most of them anxious — indeed eager — to combine their educational attainments and experiences with service to their fellow man. A high national priority will be met if this practical idealism of young Americans can be harnessed to their desire for more meaningful educational experiences by providing opportunities for needed volunteer service to disadvantaged persons and communities.

As a consequence of these developments and the creative opportunities they present, the University of Nebraska proposes to join with ACTION through a Nebraska Organization for Volunteer Action (NOVA). This new program, which merges volunteer service with education, will involve all three units of the University — the University of Nebraska—Lincoln, the University of Nebraska at Omaha, and the University of Nebraska Medical Center. Each of these campuses has already prepared and discussed with ACTION representatives preliminary NOVA programs whose implementation could begin with the 1971–72 academic year. These preliminary programs are attached as specific indications of the activities we propose to undertake through NOVA; during the planning phase we would review carefully these proposed activities with ACTION. If implemented, these programs could serve as models to be followed by colleges and universities throughout the United States. The net result could involve tens of thousands of young Americans in constructive volunteer service aimed at solving some of our society's most serious economic and social problems. At the same time NOVA would also serve as a dramatic new educational model. It provides a vehicle for enriching the learning opportunities available to students by enabling them to earn academic credit as they provide socially useful volunteer services.

The following pages briefly summarize the basic thrust of NOVA, describe its organization, suggest a number of budgetary principles, and request a grant for program planning and development.

Program Thrust

A fundamental concept to be followed in developing NOVA programs is to involve the people in the community in as full and

complete way as possible so that *their* needs, as determined by the people themselves, are clearly understood and defined. This is a difficult concept to implement. The definition of community and its sub-groups, along with the many problems of communication, present formidable challenges. Nevertheless, experienced persons who have worked to eliminate or counteract the effects of poverty are convinced that the implementation of this concept of community participation forms an indispensable foundation for a successful program.

In order to reach the people within the communities, the University staff and faculty associated with NOVA will expand and intensify their contacts with neighborhood groups and organizations in Lincoln and Omaha, as well as in "outstate" Nebraska. These groups and agencies include such established anti-poverty organizations as the Lincoln Action Program and the Greater Omaha Community Action. They also include local community self-improvement programs and tenant organizations (there are a number of these in Lincoln, Omaha, and the larger cities in the State), as well as church groups, settlement houses, and organized minority group efforts. There are, for example, a number of effective black organizations, especially in Omaha, and the state's Chicano and Indian minorities are increasingly active and visible in self-improvement activities.

The University of Nebraska already has some useful contacts and staff resources for working cooperatively with minority and low income groups through its educational programs for disadvantaged students, its educational extension activities reaching into various communities around the state, and through its participation in the Nebraska TTT Program (Training of Teacher Trainers), which has developed a strong set of contacts with Black, Chicano, and Indian groups in Nebraska. Preliminary conversations and soundings with these anti-poverty organizations and with representatives from low income and minority groups indicate that they have a genuine interest in the NOVA idea and that — if proper planning and coordination take place — they will request student volunteers.

Preliminary discussions with the Lincoln and Omaha mayors and the school superintendents of those cities have elicited expressions of positive interest in NOVA and a willingness to cooperate in this pilot venture. Specialized staff in their offices should provide valuable assistance. In addition, town councils, state offices, and other locally distinctive persons or groups can be used to "find handles"

for program development. Hopefully, faculty and students studying in academic areas related to "communities" will be of special service, as will those University faculty and students who have already had practical experience in ways whereby the poor can be involved in the development of programs intended to assist them.

In addition to poverty problems related to urban areas, special attention must be given in Nebraska to rural poverty. Two Presidential reports, "Poverty Amid Plenty" and "The People Left Behind," point in dramatic fashion to the problems of rural areas. The development of NOVA programs and studies for this area can be accomplished through the utilization of faculty, students, and area and county home agents in the College of Agriculture and the College of Home Economics.

Although the "people problems" of Nebraska are by no means atypical from those of the country as a whole, they may exist in different proportions. The following problem areas are identified to underscore the emphases that will be followed by the staff in working with the local communities during the program planning and development states:

- | | |
|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| A. Housing | I. Rural |
| B. Elderly | J. Ecological Improvement and |
| C. Unemployment | Pollution Control in |
| D. Drug Abuse | Selected Communities |
| E. Business Development | K. Mobilization of Non-Paid |
| (specifically for minorities) | Volunteer Groups |
| F. Medical-Health Care | L. Crime, Correction, and Law |
| G. Nutrition and Family Planning | Enforcement |
| H. Formal Education | M. Recreation |

A variety of academic disciplines can contribute faculty and students capable of working toward solutions in these problem areas. Clearly, "people problems" do not lend themselves to neat categorization. For example, it is conceivable and even likely that a rural elderly person may have health and housing problems.

A part of the challenge and excitement inherent in the NOVA program comes from matching faculty and student skills with problem areas that need volunteer service. The housing area, for example, suggests how knowledge and skills can be applied to the sub-problems associated with poor housing:

Sub-Problems

- a. For the elderly

Knowledge-Skills

- a. Sociology and other Social Sciences,
Gerontology, Architecture, Medicine,
Finance, Recreation

- | | |
|----------------------|--|
| b. Minicities | b. Psychology, Sociology and Social Sciences, Law, Journalism and Advertising, Promotion |
| c. Rural areas | c. Agricultural Extension Specialist, Economics Forecasting, Finance, Agricultural Economics |
| d. Tenants | d. Social Sciences, Agricultural Economics, Economics, Journalism |
| e. Location | e. Planners, Engineers, Architects |
| f. Inadequate supply | f. Real Estate, Finance, Construction Science, Architecture, Public Administration |

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Faculty and students will be matched with specific projects once program areas have been established, job descriptions provided, and specific community interests and needs ascertained.

Organization

The Chancellor of the University of Nebraska has taken a special and personal interest in developing this program, and he will continue to give it attention and leadership. A Vice Chancellor has been designated to provide coordination and general supervision.

The NOVA program at each of the three campuses will be the responsibility of the senior academic administrator, while the administration and day-to-day leadership will be in the hands of a campus director. These six staff, along with the Chancellor and Vice Chancellor, will form an eight-member executive committee for NOVA. Each campus will utilize faculty, students, and individuals from the community on advisory committees.

The basic working structure for the program will provide for a faculty supervisor and a community supervisor in a close relationship to the NOVA volunteer. The details of this relationship may vary with projects and/or project location; they will be described in detail during the planning and development stages.

Budgetary Planning Principles

- A. Students from low income families, or those needing to finance their own education, would not be discouraged from program participation by virtue of monetary limitations.
- B. Faculty costs normally provided for by the institution to teach students on campus will continue as institutional costs.

- C. ACTION will provide for community staff supervision and faculty supervision of one each for 10 NOVA student workers.
- D. NOVA students will be eligible for institutional financial assistance on the same basis as other students.
- E. Full-time NOVA workers will be paid for subsistence at the rate of \$160 per month in Omaha and \$150 elsewhere, excluding travel costs, and they will receive a \$600 completion and separation payment at the end of 12 months.
- F. NOVA students will pay tuition and required fees.
- G. Normal federal percentage for indirect overhead costs will be provided to the University.
- H. For certain projects located in western Nebraska, special attention will be needed for travel costs.
- I. Communication, both written and oral, will be at a premium.
- J. As a pilot and experimental program, special start up and promotional costs are anticipated.
- K. The University will not plan to have unused funds by virtue of program participation, but neither should the program siphon off the limited resources of the University.
- L. Funds will be provided to *evaluate* the success of a NOVA student-worker and also to *evaluate* the success of a project.
- M. It is expected that approximately 100 full-time NOVA student-workers can be recruited by September 1; a target objective of an additional 100 full-time NOVA volunteers will be pursued for the second semester of the academic year. Additionally, the NOVA program hopes to develop mechanisms through which part-time student volunteers can be mobilized.

Program Development and Planning Grant Request

In order to begin NOVA by August 25, 1971, the following staffing for program development and planning is essential:

Beginning July 1, 1971 —

University of Nebraska - Lincoln	
Campus Director or Coordinator	\$ 2,600.00
Project Developer (Field Coordinator)	2,400.00
Student Recruiter	2,400.00
Secretary (9 weeks)	900.00
Other clerical	650.00

20 Faculty Supervisors (3-day pre-service training)	4,800.00
11.2% of \$13,700 (salaries) retirement, FICA	1,540.00
Pre-September testing, screening of students	1,000.00
Consultants	1,000.00
Telephone communications	500.00
Travel, Printing, Duplicating, Office Supplies	2,300.00
Total	\$20,090.00

University of Nebraska at Omaha

Planning Coordinator	\$ 2,000.00
4 part-time faculty @ \$1300.00	5,200.00
Field Program Developer	1,400.00
3 Community Consultants (full time for 3 weeks each)	900.00
2 Student Recruiters, 8 weeks each @ \$100.00 per week	1,600.00
1 Secretary	800.00
Supplies, Publications and Telephone	2,300.00
Travel	1,500.00
Screening of Students	1,000.00
11.2% for Social Security, Retirement, etc.	1,332.80
Total	\$18,032.80

University of Nebraska Medical Center

Director (2 months @ half time)	\$1,000.00
Secretary	800.00
Orientation of Faculty	600.00
Travel and Office Expenses	900.00
Total	\$3,300.00

University of Nebraska Total Direct Costs

July 1 - September 1, 1971, for the three campuses; this figure does not include an anticipated allowance for indirect overhead costs	<u>\$41,422.80</u>
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Summary

If ACTION can make this planning and development grant, the University of Nebraska can begin to implement the NOVA program during the 1971-72 academic year. Obviously, intensive and rapid efforts must be undertaken in a short period of time. This paper represents a general overview of our plans, and should be read in connection with preliminary campus proposals. A more complete program and a detailed budget proposal for NOVA will be developed, in close coordination with ACTION representatives, during July. Because of the shortage of time and the need to establish appropriate arrangements both within the University and within Nebraska's communities, our objective must be to have a 1971-72

budget and a contract awarded by ACTION no later than August 1, 1971.

The proposed Nebraska Organization for Volunteer Action represents a unique opportunity for this University to work with the federal government in providing needed volunteers, harnessing the practical idealism of American youth, and improving higher education. We sincerely hope that ACTION will find it possible to support NOVA so that this opportunity can be seized now for the purpose of bettering American life and education.



Although ACTION itself was not an official entity until July 1, 1971, it was understood that the University of Nebraska would receive a planning grant to fund a two month developmental period for NOVA.

Therefore, NOVA directors were named on each campus, effective July 1: Gene Harding at Lincoln, Mike Adams at Omaha, and Louis Burgher at the Medical Center. Vice Chancellor G. Robert Ross was selected to coordinate the system-wide effort.

There were few "givens" during this period. Even titles were shifting. The university regents changed Chancellor Varner's title to *President*. The chief officer of each campus, the president, then became *chancellor*. During this time the Lincoln campus chancellor resigned, and Peter Magrath, who had been dean of faculties, became *interim chancellor*. When NOVA directors were named, the new program was still termed the Volunteer Action Program. By July it had been dubbed the Nebraska Organization for Volunteers in Action; Washington officials changed that name to Nebraska *Opportunities for Volunteers in Action*.

The Lincoln campus planning group that produced the original proposal had its own disagreement about an appropriate title for the group and about its function in the NOVA program. Several members believed the group should be a steering committee that would function as a policy making body throughout the program. Peter Magrath, who had organized the group, ultimately defined it as an advisory committee that would function only until September 15.

One important task had been accomplished at UNL during this period of administrative flux. Walter Bruning, assistant dean of faculties, had consulted with chairmen of academic departments and had arranged for NOVA students to register for regular credit courses while they were in the field. Nearly 125 credit hours were

available to volunteers in the field. Psychology, sociology, education, home economics, political science, anthropology and social work provided most of the courses.

Even this facet, however, was subject to change. When faculty returned to the campus at the end of the summer, some totally disagreed about the applicability of their courses to field situations and would not permit students to register for specific courses. (By spring the number of available credit hours had diminished to approximately 40).

Development of field placements — of jobs — was another major task that had to be accomplished with a great deal of haste if volunteers were to be in the field in September. Mick Zangari, a member of the University Extension Division staff, was named NOVA field supervisor at UNL, and within six weeks he had received some 200 requests for volunteers. Approximately 160 of these fulfilled the requirements of the original proposal and were adaptable to the UNL program. Requests were accepted from all parts of the state except Omaha — that city was to be served by the Omaha campus.

Recruiting of students was begun from a temporary office in the student union building, with a student, Steve Tiwald, taking responsibility for sending letters to nearly 3500 persons who would be juniors in September. Students were informed that this educational option would allow them to register for 30 semester hours during the twelve month year, and that they would receive a living allowance (the amount had still not been determined when training began August 25). They would pay their own tuition and would be required to live in the low income neighborhoods in which they worked.

Tiwald's letters were supported by a number of news releases; the first was dated July 23.

The confusion at this point was compounded by ACTION's own ambiguity. The agency was simply too new to be able to offer much assistance in the development of NOVA, but it made efforts to help.

One effort related to job development for volunteers. An ACTION staffer was assigned to help Mick Zangari plan meaningful placements in Nebraska — some time after most of the applications for volunteers had been received. An ex-Peace Corps administrator in Africa, this individual worked hard to try to assure that placements would be fruitful, but the timing of his involvement and his African community background did little to contribute to the smoothness of the period.

At about the same time, in mid-July, ACTION engaged General Learning Corporation to take responsibility for volunteer training. This came as a surprise to NOVA faculty and staff who had been given the same responsibility by the university, and the resulting conflict was finally resolved by an agreement that two General Learning consultants would remain in Nebraska to assist, but not direct, training. The two, Brenda Bryant and Bob Kohls, contributed materially to the program.

It was also during this period that ACTION's Washington office announced that the regional office in Kansas City would have responsibility — in part — for supervising volunteers in the field. A check with Kansas City indicated that personnel there didn't know what that responsibility would involve.

With information coming from Washington, from the original proposal, from General Learning personnel, from ACTION staff in Nebraska, and from Kansas City University staff were baffled. Negotiations on the 1971-72 grant were in progress, with Vice President Robert Ross representing the University, but there was still no agreement about the funding level.

Peter Magrath's memo to Ross (August 2) reflects some of the frustration:

I have watched developments in the NOVA program unfold during the past two weeks with growing concern. Without exaggeration I must report that my concern is now turning to alarm. Among the fundamental problems are these:

1. We simply do not know who in Washington is in charge of ACTION and can give us authoritative guidelines. (As you well know, in at least one crucial case, we did not even receive the original draft guidelines until last week, and then only by accident. . . .)
2. There appears to be a fundamental lack of realism on the part of ACTION with regard to the budgetary costs associated with this program if it is to be conducted as a useful venture from the community point of view and as a respectable academic program. In spite of what I believe to be an excellent effort on the part of all components of the University of Nebraska System, the confusion in Washington has seriously affected our ability to begin the program by the beginning of the semester, which is now less than a month away. . . .

As you and Chancellor Varner know, I have been an early and enthusiastic supporter of the NOVA concept. I am convinced that we will do the University of Nebraska a disservice if we allow ourselves to try to implement a delicate experimental program that is unclearly directed from Washington and inadequately funded. We simply have too many other claims on our time and limited administrative and faculty resources to permit the luxury of an ill-conceived venture.

I urgently request that if we cannot receive satisfactory and definite

clarification from ACTION by this Friday, August 6, we communicate to ACTION that we are deferring our possible start of the NOVA program until the second semester of 1971-72.

Answers to all of the University's questions were not provided in the next few days, or in the next few months, but the starting time was not deferred.

Shortly before pre-field training was to begin on August 25, the program was assigned its "permanent" quarters, the Administration Annex on Lincoln's East campus. The structure had served as a poultry science building in earlier days and, later, as headquarters for a University program in Turkey, and was popularly known as "Turkey Hall." It was currently used as a warehouse for Agricultural Extension publications. The second floor was declared off-limits by University safety personnel and the fire marshal, but Turkey Hall was all that was available so the move was made. (The fire marshal's apprehension proved to be valid — there was a small electrical fire in the NOVA office during the initial orientation meeting of volunteers August 25.)

During August final arrangements were made with academic departments for NOVA staff. Harding, Zangari and secretary Michaela Currin were to work on the project full-time; all other faculty were hired on a fractional time basis as indicated below:

Otto Hoiberg, sociology (1/10 time)
Carroll McKibbin, political science (1/5 time)
John Comer, political science (assisted Prof. McKibbin)
K. Vidall, elementary education (1/5 time)
Elizabeth Crobsmith, anthropology (1/2 time)
Steven Scott, psychology and social work (1/3 time)
Edgar Kelley, secondary education (1/10 time)
Bert Evans, agricultural economics (1/5 time)
Diane Ferger, food and nutrition (1/5 time)
Ruby Gingles, human development and the family (1/5 time)

This was the faculty that was on hand to meet the first NOVA volunteers. How many students volunteered? Certainly not the hordes that university and federal planners had anticipated. Of the 3500 contacted, 77 responded positively, 64 were invited to participate in the four week training and screening, and 52 actually appeared. Of these, 32 were selected for ACTION's University Year in Action, Phase I.

Much attention was focused upon these 32 and on the 11 addi-

tional students who joined NOVA in January. The editor of the North Platte Telegraph assessed their situation this way:

North Platte Telegraph. Friday, July 30, 1971

A University comes to town

The "NOVA" program outlined in North Platte this week holds exciting potential for the community and the state.

It also holds the potential of a lot of headaches.

University of Nebraska students who volunteer will spend a year working in communities across the state, trying to help with specific community problems.

The University's proposal for operating the program with the federal government described the challenge this way:

"... There is a growing recognition of the fact... that American higher education must adapt itself to new social conditions by becoming more efficient and more innovative in its teaching and learning programs: **students do not learn only in classrooms**, and the educational house should be one with many doors and windows into learning experience. At the same time we are all equally aware that many college youth are increasingly restless... to combine their educational attainments and experiences with service to their fellow man. . . ."

In other words, the University is saying what some critics have said all along: that you can't learn everything in the classroom and it might help to get a little practical experience in real problems rather than taking all your theories out of a book. People who feel that way about education should welcome NOVA as a step in their direction.

The learning process in this case might work several ways. The student mingles theory and practice. The University, through professors working closely with students in the field, learns something about people and communities who otherwise would never have had any contact with the campus. And communities such as ours may learn that the campus has something to offer of practical use to us beyond its traditional role of educating some young people. It could open avenues for a new sort of return on our tax investment.

The headaches? Not all students will perform perfectly. Not all communities will give them a chance. In a political year, both the errors and the accomplishments are likely to be magnified out of all proportion.

The whole thing is filled with the sort of risks educators generally have been reluctant to take.

Success will depend first upon the ability to select and define realistic goals and to maintain a continuous contact with students once they are assigned.

But beyond that, success or failure will largely be determined by the students themselves and the attitudes in the communities in which they work.

Hopefully, this community will welcome NOVA as a new opportunity, a new idea that will not produce miracles but may produce something worth-while.

We have become the campus, and we ought to recognize that brings to all of us a new sort of responsibility.

NOVA in Progress— An Administrative Overview

To a large extent, the screening of NOVA volunteers was done by the volunteers themselves during the initial days of training at UNL's Hall of Youth. Several left during the first two days of filling out federal and university forms. (By the time the program was ending in 1974 there were nearly three dozen federal forms to be used by NOVA). A few more withdrew after five day training stints in the communities where they had chosen to volunteer.

Others were requested to withdraw from the program because they were on academic probation, because they were not rated well by a screening committee of community representatives and faculty, or because they scored extremely low in interviews conducted for NOVA by the Human Resources Foundation, a university related organization experienced in volunteer selection.

Training emphasized community analysis, group techniques, interpersonal relationships, and a study of available resources. It also included visits to specific agencies and institutions such as schools, welfare offices, community action agencies and hospitals. Consultants included faculty, agency representatives, and individuals from specific communities, including low income and minority group citizens, and former Peace Corps and VISTA volunteers.

During this period volunteers met the community supervisors with whom they would work on a day-to-day basis, and they began to establish working relationships with the faculty. Mick Zangari, field supervisor, helped students locate suitable housing in their new communities.

The last few days of training had their own special kind of excitement. One volunteer felt that it was impossible for him to accept the oath required to become a NOVA, by this time defined as a VISTA associate. He was finally allowed to modify the statement to fit his own beliefs. Three volunteers were notified by Washington's

Office of Citizen Placement that they had been "deselected." No reasons were cited, and a telephone call to the officer involved produced no reasons.

The entire body of volunteers voted to drop out of the program if their colleagues weren't accepted and, finally, permission was received to induct the three on the condition that the Lincoln NOVA director assume personal responsibility for them. (Later, in Washington, the placement official was asked why the three had been turned down, and he said only that his office had a responsibility to not accept all applicants, so they evaluated the forms sent them and eliminated those that seemed weakest). The incident was a positive one for NOVA. It helped build a strong group identity, and it established the university's authority to select volunteers in its own program.

On September 27 the 32 new NOVAs were in the field. They were placed on jobs as follows:

- Charlotte Anderson (Psychology) — Lincoln Regional Center, behavioral adjustment aide.
- Curtis Andrews (Physical Therapy) — League of Human Dignity, an organization for physically handicapped. Lincoln.
- Christopher Babcock (Psychology) — Lincoln Public Schools Individual Needs Learning Center (dropout program).
- Susan Diane Bean (Social Welfare) — Lincoln Regional Center Morton School (emotionally disturbed children).
- Kathleen Bluma (Social Welfare) — Lincoln Municipal Court, probation counselor.
- Nancy Brickson (Speech and Drama) — Lincoln Child Guidance Center, counselor.
- Joan Christensen (Human Development and the Family) — Malone Center, Headstart Day Care parent involvement. Lincoln.
- Joseph Colantuono (Psychology/Sociology) — Statewide Housing Coalition Lincoln.
- Susan Dahms (Elementary Education) — Goldenrod Hills Community Action Program, Headstart parent involvement. Walt Hill.
- Kathleen Danker (Anthropology) — Nebraska Intertribal Economic Development Corporation, curriculum development. Winnebago.
- Bradley Dickson (Social Welfare) — Gage County Probation Office, Counselor. Beatrice.

Christine Funk (Secondary Education) — Lincoln Legal Service Society, community legal education.

Janet Gabelhouse (Home Economics Education) — County Extension Service, North Platte.

Mary Gorynski (Sociology/Psychology) — Lincoln Public Schools Headstart and Follow Through, parent involvement.

Colleen Halpine (Food and Nutrition) — County Extension Service, North Platte.

Mark Johnson (Political Science) — Lincoln Action Program, legislative aide.

Barbara Klein (Human Development and the Family) — Community Coordinated Child Care organizer, Lincoln.

Leon Larimer (grad, Psychology) — Lincoln Municipal Court, probation counselor.

Margaret Mairoy (Social Welfare) — Lincoln Legal Service Society, housing specialist.

John Marinkovich (Elementary Education) — Santee Sioux Tribal Council, Community School, Santee.

Scott McDuffee (Sociology) — Nebraska Intertribal Economic Development Corporation, curriculum development, Winnebago.

Sharen McNally (Human Development and the Family) — Inner City 4-H, Lincoln and Lancaster County Extension Service.

Susan Lee Miller (Social Welfare) — Santee Sioux Tribal Council, housing project, Santee.

Linda Nelson (Elementary Education) — Commission for Christian Concern, tutoring and day care, North Platte.

Susan Pettey (Political Science) — Lincoln League of Women Voters, welfare reform.

John Rickel (Psychology) — Lincoln Council on Alcoholism and Drugs, counseling.

Barbara Sieck (Social Welfare and Sociology) — Lincoln Council on Alcoholism and Drugs, counseling.

Judy Spickelmier (Fashion Design) — Grand Generation Center, Lexington.

Peggy Stevens (Special Education) — Lancaster Office of Mental Retardation, activities coordinator, Lincoln.

Laura Lee Ulrich (Speech Pathology) — Lancaster Office of Mental Retardation, community learning adviser, Lincoln.

Susan J. Williams (Home Economics) — Lancaster Office of Mental Retardation, home economics, Lincoln.

Victoria Lee Zessin (Secondary Education) -- Gage County Probation Office, counselor. Beatrice.

In general, relationships with community supervisors were deemed by faculty to be positive, but not close. The part-time nature of most staff appointments precluded their spending much time with community supervisors.

Jobs were modified, of course, as students worked within local agencies. Three of the thirty-two students were moved from one agency to another during the program; the rest adapted to their original assignment.

Most community supervisors took their responsibilities very seriously and provided appropriate guidance and support for NOVAs. Twenty four of the 32 volunteers were evaluated by community supervisors after three months in the field. The composite rating is shown in the following chart:

	Very		
	Inadequate	Adequate	Good Superior
ABILITY			
Leadership (Successful group management, secures others' confidence)	10	8	6
Communication (Listens and expresses self effectively)	4	14	6
Use of community resources (Knows how to secure help)	4	11	9
Knowledge (Learned from job performance) (individual inquiry)	2	12	10
PERSONALITY AND ATTITUDE			
Enthusiasm (Shows involvement and interest)		13	11
Interpersonal skills (Demonstrates empathy, cooperates with others and profits from criticism)	3	9	12
RESPONSIBILITY			
(maintains log, follows through on job and academic commitments)	2	12	8
INITIATIVE			
(Establishes and attains personal goals on his own)	22	2	12 9

In addition to formal evaluation, people in communities where NOVAs worked sent numbers of letters detailing student accomplishments and commending the university for the effort.

One group that was not pleased with NOVA was the New Congress for Community Development, a Chicano organization in western Nebraska. Final budget negotiations with ACTION had not produced the funds necessary to support students that far from Lincoln, so North Platte became the cut-off point for NOVA assignments.

The Chicano group protested to Governor James Exon. The governor, who must approve VISTA (and NOVA) assignments, also protested; consequently, additional funds were obtained from ACTION so that NOVAs could be assigned to Alliance, Scottsbluff and Chadron second semester.

Another group that maintained a skeptical view of the program was Task Force IV of the TTT Project (a University of Nebraska project —Teaching Teachers to Teach). The group desired greater "input into NOVA policy decisions."

While this group had apprehensions that NOVA was an establishment agency exploiting low income people, some state government officials feared NOVA would have a group of "kids making trouble around the state." One agency head said of NOVA, "You have a tiger by the tail," and termed Community Action personnel "a bunch of radicals."

At least one other group had deep concerns, not only about NOVA, but about the entire University Year in Action program. This was the VISTA Alliance, volunteers and former volunteers who feared that UYA was President Nixon's device to weaken VISTA.

During the first week of November a national UYA conference was conducted in Washington D.C. The several universities and colleges who were involved by this time revised the formal agenda and provided the following list of concerns for discussion. The list included most of Nebraska's problems.

1. Inappropriateness of the VISTA model for UYA.
2. Selection and deselection procedures for volunteers.
3. Termination allowances and dependency allowances for volunteers.
4. Determination of federal status for volunteers.
5. The requirement that students serve 12 months.
6. Funds for community supervisors.

7. Inadequacy of total budget.
8. Faculty stipends.
9. Federal reports.
10. Evaluation procedures.
11. The lack of communication—Washington, regional offices and universities.
12. Development of job descriptions.

Soon after the Washington conference (in late November), ACTION issued a new set of UYA guidelines that deepened NOVA faculty concern about the future of the program. A letter from the Lincoln director to Dean Walter Bruning outlined that concern.

Dec. 10, 1974

Professors Bert Evans, Ed Kelley and I have studied the new UYA guidelines Action has prepared, and we have serious questions to raise about them. I have made no effort to categorize problems, but have simply listed some of the major problems for consideration by the NOVA executive committee. (Memos from Evans, Kelley and Hoiberg are attached.)

Bert Evans stresses the following:

1. Action has made assumptions that problems of poverty can be "solved" in a year. The problems are . . . "in reality symptoms of more pervasive economic and social structures that are not amenable to student efforts . . ."

2. Guidelines ignore . . . entirely the principles of community development with respect to working *with* a community as opposed to working *for* or *in* "spite of a community." This has become a problem with goals imposed from the top-down.

3. Guidelines assume talents of students to be above existing agency personnel now in the field.

4. Action ignores completely the matter of student learning.

5. "The idea of doing the kind of comprehensive planning for placement and work that is outlined in the booklet to be done in "T minus 30" (whatever that means) involving NOVA staff, departments, communities, agencies and the like could not possibly be done as is suggested."

Ed Kelley's comments:

1. The proposal, on balance, has good points, but is . . . "unreasonable for UNE since it presupposes an urban model." It would also require more planning time than is available.

2. The ratio of 2/3 students on group projects (min. 8 per project) to 1/3 individual projects is not acceptable.

3. The local project concept is "totally unacceptable."

I have these further concerns:

- * Guidelines negate our own proposal. Many people spent a good deal of time last summer preparing a program outline that is completely disregarded by the new guidelines.

Action now demands:

- * Programs will focus on a limited number of projects and a limited number of sites. A limited number means three or four, with eight students on each. This won't work here. We have, as you know, geographic, ethnic, and various social pressures to spread our students through several needs. We also have an over-riding responsibility to provide situations that are compatible with the learning needs of students from various departments, with various personal goals. Beyond this, we have standing commitments to communities as a result of our Action-directed program development last fall, and we have a governor who is saying we should serve all parts of the state—not a few selected sites.

- * The basis for choosing projects is offensive. Only those projects having "measurable indicators" will be considered. That is, as Blatchford told us in Washington, someone must be counting all the time . . . We must show percentage improvements, head counts, etc. . . in order to get funds for the nation-wide program. This is horrible. Our short experience has shown us that the best jobs include those that involve one-to-one relationships between our students and needy individuals . . . mentally retarded, elderly, mental patients, kids on probation. What happens in individual lives is not that measureable. We certainly aren't going to be able to show that there is less retardation, mental illness or delinquency in any case . . . and we should not pretend to do so. Dr. Otto Hoiberg writes: "I would suggest that it is unwise to force the evaluation of a nonstatistical program into a statistical mold. This leads to nothing more than a sham, perpetrated by the cooperating university to meet an Action requirement." Action seeks "straight line incremental achievement in quarterly periods." (page 25) Absurd!

- * We had pared our budget to the hurting point before the first phase. Now, with no negotiation, Action tells us that we will have only \$2,000 per student to manage the program. This is a \$1,200 per capita reduction . . . a loss of \$12,000 for the ten volunteers we are proposing. That hardly balances with the earlier commitment to allow us \$4,600 to serve western Nebraska. We lost \$7,400 on the total transaction, plus \$4,500 that mystically disappeared from the lower part of our first grant. Again, we are reminded that Action will not fund educational costs.

- * If we were to agree that the "planned impact" approach is feasible, we couldn't do an honest job in the short time remaining before mid-January. Evans and Mike Adams agree. Adams told me that what Action is asking is what you might logically expect as the *outcome* of a year's work in a community, not as a proposal for a year's work.

- * Eight students per project will be unacceptable to Nebraska communities. That is too many. They are too visible and too hard to supervise in large numbers. We have talked at length at Nebraska about the inadvisability of this policy.

- * The guidelines periodically include a reference to community members who will help make "policy decisions" etc. This is unreal. The policy decisions are made by Action—in the guidelines—and they leave few options for community—or faculty—or students—or University—or agencies to participate in decision making. This is an important consideration, too. We have several rather serious problems right now

with community groups. We haven't handled this consideration well to date; the guidelines will lead us into worse problems.

Sincerely,
Gene Harding
Director, NOVA-Lincoln

It was a slow process, but, in very small steps, relationships and understandings between the university and ACTION did improve during the tenuous first year.

Relationships with non-university groups were not all-consuming, of course. Faculty met regularly with their students in the field and shared their observations and problems at weekly NOVA staff meetings. Mick Zangari visited all job sites during the first month students were in the field, and new job descriptions were developed for second semester placements.

Several seemingly small matters required large quantities of time; a new program like NOVA does not always fit existing institutional machinery. Efforts were made to enlarge the number of "pass/fail" hours for which field students could register—the question was tabled by the University Grading Committee.

A major problem, for a short while, concerned telephone use. University WATS lines are routinely monitored by operators to prevent personal use by employees. An operator, monitoring a NOVA faculty-student conversation, deemed the content to be personal, so she terminated the call. NOVA staff explained that their telephone counseling of students must be confidential due to the unique circumstances of students. It was vitally important that faculty develop personal, trusting relationships with NOVAs. Consequently, the monitoring policy was altered for NOVA staff.

Even campus parking regulations did not fit the new program—there were not parking spaces at the warehouse that had become NOVA headquarters, and students reporting in from the field, part-time faculty from the city campus, and community representatives produced numbers of parking citations for NOVA staff to "fix."

Matters such as these were minor, but time consuming.

The main activities in mid-year were the evaluation of first phase students and the training of those eleven selected for Phase II.

Western Nebraska received eight NOVAs in January, six from Phase II and two transfers from other sites.

The eleven new students were:

- Steve Benson (Secondary Education)—Lincoln Municipal Court Probation Office, Counselor.
- Deborah Detenbeck (Social Welfare)—Community Action Agency, Headstart parent involvement. Chadron.
- Wayne Faris (Sociology)—Community Action Agency, public information service. Chadron.
- Gwen Gage (Social Welfare)—Lancaster Office of Mental Retardation, Lincoln.
- Kathleen Hankla (Special Education)—Scottsbluff Office of Mental Retardation, Adult Development Home.
- Michael Johnson (Secondary Education)—Gering County Probation Office, Counselor.
- Lucy Kerchberger (Anthropology)—Alliance Public Schools. Community Guidance Center.
- John Mangimeli (Integrated Studies)—Alliance Public Schools. Community Guidance Center.
- Martin Winkler (Pre Med)—Indian, Mexican-American Health Clinic. Omaha.
- Gary Zimmer (Sociology)—Community Action Agency, Chicano youth. Grand Island.
- Robyn Zimmer (Elementary Education) Community Action Agency, Chicano youth. Grand Island.

The NOVA staff remained intact through the first year except that Rosa Lee Wright replaced secretary Michaela Currin when she resigned second semester.

ACTION personnel conducted evaluation of all Phase I schools in the spring of 1972, and their report was heartening to UNL:

Dr. Robert Ross, Vice President
and Director of UYA
University of Nebraska
Lincoln, Nebraska 68508

Dear Bob:

As you know the evaluation of Phase I UYA schools is now in progress. Complete results are now in on four programs, including the University of Nebraska.

The VISTA evaluations instrument is being used, and was utilized as a component of the Lincoln and Omaha evaluation during Al Johnson's visit last month. In addition to the above, a Program Manager's assessment has been submitted, and the questionnaires sent out to Volunteer

supervisors are nearly all back. There seems to be sufficient data accumulated to allow me to give you our judgment at this time.

Briefly the University of Nebraska has simultaneously appeared at the top of the numerical scale with Lincoln in the high 70's and at the bottom with Omaha in the low 100's. In the Program Manager's assessment of 12 schools, rated on 6 program points, Omaha came out last and Lincoln near the top. The VISTA evaluation of 4 programs shows Lincoln first and Omaha last. The Medical School was not formally evaluated but these seem to be of very little practical value in continuing a program there, since no ones expectations have been met. There have been 3 Volunteers during the first quarter and there are now only two active Volunteers.

Clearly the results of our evaluation seems to point in the direction of continuing only with the Lincoln NOVA, providing funds are available, and concentrating any expansion of UYA at that campus. I had not wanted to make this judgment earlier hoping our impressions would be disproved but such is not the case. It seemed to me best to get this to you as soon as possible—telegraphic as it is.

Regards,

Jerry Brady

By January, 1972, NOVA administrators on all three campuses had begun to agree that the program should be blended into one administrative structure to replace the three relatively autonomous offices that existed. The Lincoln director had indicated that he would not continue in the program after the first year.

In April a search committee of faculty, administrators, students and community representatives chose Theodore Ernst to be the three-campus director. Ernst, director of the Graduate School of Social Work, withdrew from the program, however, in early September, citing the following reasons:

1. ACTION's insistence on grouping volunteers into a few, concentrated program areas, rather than giving NU freedom to scatter its students around the state into various communities.
2. ACTION's request for certification, in detail, of "planned impact programming," with documentation of what problems NOVAs would tackle, exactly how they would go about their work, how they would detail statistical proof of their efforts, and how the change NOVAs would initiate would be institutionalized.
3. ACTION's insistence, after it had promised it would not reject NOVA applicants except for medical or legal reasons, that it retain the privilege of turning down candidates it believed were "not ready" for the volunteer work ahead.

4. Uncertainty over whether the regional or Washington office of ACTION had the authority to approve NU's program.

After Ernst's resignation, Edgar Kelley, who had been on the NOVA faculty from the beginning of the program, was named NOVA director. He held that position until summer, 1974. By the beginning of second semester, 1973-74, the University of Nebraska had decided it would terminate its involvement with ACTION on June 30, 1974.

NOVA Faculty: Their Perceptions of the Program

First year NOVA faculty were representatives of the various academic departments that granted credit for field work. Each department had been asked to provide a portion of a professor's time, preferably a senior staff member. NOVA provided a proportionate share of salaries so that departments could secure replacements.

The fact that these arrangements had to be made in July and August made staff development difficult. In two cases, departmental chairmen felt it impossible or unwise to change their existing staffing plans for fall, so graduate assistants were assigned to NOVA. At any rate, by September 1, twelve faculty, including the director and the field supervisor, were ready to begin the project.

Because each student registered in courses from several departments, faculty were forced into interdisciplinary situations which were quite new to most. Primarily for this reason, staff meetings were held each week. At these times, faculty shared their perspectives of student activities and needs, sought advice from representatives of other disciplines, and occasionally arranged for conferences between their own advisees and other professors.

The role of the NOVA faculty had been defined in the following working paper, developed in the spring, 1971, planning period. It proved to be a fairly accurate outline.

NOVA Faculty: A Working Paper

Supervising volunteers in the field is an unknown experience for many professors. The University is deeply concerned about this relationship and the granting of credit for work experience. A great burden will rest on the faculty member's shoulders as evaluation of the student proceeds during his NOVA year to develop adequate processes for measuring the student's academic progress.

In many ways, the NOVA faculty member will be akin to a professor directing graduate study because of the tutorial nature of his duties. At the University of Nebraska-Lincoln a heavy graduate student advising load for a professor teaching two courses per semester would be 4-5 students. Yet, the faculty member or his department receive no extraordinary credit to recognize this load.

Consider this problem if each student were located off-campus to the extent of occasionally being 200 miles away. The faculty member must still maintain an intimate liaison with his charge, but, now this liaison is carried out over distance; and, it is carried out in a real and fluid environment, the community.

Duties

The faculty supervisor shall visit his supervisee a minimum of 4 contact hours per month, in field meetings.

- (1) To aid the NOVA volunteer in performance and development of his job.
- (2) To evaluate the job activity of the NOVA volunteer and determine its relationship to the granting of academic credit.
- (3) To encourage and assist the NOVA volunteer to relate his work experiences to abstract academic principles and theories so that the student will be led to his own conclusions about the real applicability of classroom material.
- (4) To read, evaluate, and comment continually upon the student's written daily log (very much like an adviser's review of his graduate student's research notebook.)
- (5) To evaluate the student's midyear report, and his final report.
- (6) To conduct small group seminar sessions, in the field on a monthly basis involving the student, his community supervisor, and other NOVA's and their community supervisors.
- (7) To meet with community supervisors and discuss all phases of the NOVA's job and performance on a twice monthly basis. (In conjunction with visits to NOVA volunteer.)
- (8) To consult in formal staffings with NOVA faculty colleagues and the director concerning the fulfillment of academic credit requirements by the volunteer and to report on job progress.
- (9) To consult formally with faculty colleagues from other departments concerning job performance of the volunteer

and its relationship to credit offered by the other departments.

- (10) To help recruit additional volunteers.
- (11) To consult with departmental colleagues concerning NOVA volunteers' behavior on jobs.
- (12) To structure the NOVA experience, as much as possible, to be an active volunteer project as well as a reflective intellectual experience.

Lincoln campus NOVAs, meeting in Lincoln after seven months in the field, had their own views of the role of faculty in this new setting, and of the characteristics of effective faculty.

They agreed quite generally that they would like to have more contact with their faculty supervisors than they were experiencing.

The following criteria were extracted from student discussion sessions March 20, 1971:

The NOVA professor —

Should be a "person who would volunteer for the program" because he believes in it. "Beware of 'letter-sweater hawks' in the faculty — people who feel the need to accumulate honors through association with NOVA."

Should be flexible — willing to adjust requirements and procedures (NOT simply forget requirements) to fit specific situations.

Must be able to *listen* — "objectively, without sanctions."

Is "not afraid to step out of the 'faculty role.'"

Is humble — "open to learning in the community."

Is informal, easy to talk with. "... good in human relations."

Is empathetic.

Is not *too* idealistic; not completely "academically" oriented.

Meets the student *in* the community. "It's good to have a faculty adviser come into the community because he has a more objective view" than local, involved people.

Is acquainted with the community in which the student works.

Knows the background of the agency in which the student works and is willing to develop working relationships with agency personnel.

Understands the student's job assignment.

Has *adequate time* to work with field students.

Serves as a "hotline" to potential learning experiences (conferences, etc.) on-campus and out-state.

Reads, and reacts *verbally*, to student's daily log.

Maintains contact with college departments and on-campus instructors.

Is familiar with college requirements and procedures and keeps students current with campus requirements (Example: Notifies students of campus deadlines, such as dates for registering for student teaching.)

Knows how to help students obtain learning resources (reading materials, specialists from the campus, etc.)

In May, 1972, NOVA faculty tried to express their view of NOVA as an educational experience. It was a challenging task. One professor stated the consensus: "The fact that learning has occurred is obvious, but how does one go about supporting this fact?"

... these middle class girls have learned to work with minority groups, poor parents, mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed, young people on probation. They have not only learned to work with these people but have effected change in them in some way. The fact that they have learned to work with people within the system, in itself, is not particularly impressive. The fact that they have weathered periods of elation when they thought their ideas were going to be adopted — then the periods of depression when these ideas fell or were pushed by the wayside — is not overly impressive. The fact that all have had to learn to roll with the punches as their agencies underwent change — sometimes radical change — does not impress one particularly.

Yet I have watched these girls go from dewy eyed young ladies to mature, thoughtful, experienced (in dealing with others and perceiving their feelings) young women. They have learned that the world can't be changed in a day, and they are now willing to choose an avenue and stay with it to try to bring about change.

Another professor believed that the immediacy of the students' needs was one of the basic strengths of the program:

Knowledge in social, economic, political and cultural matters is not a matter of hard facts—there seems to be truth, new truth, and newer truth. Even theory and principle change at an accelerated rate. This is the stimulus to learn that NOVA provides: it induces the students to read and search rapidly in order to cope with the enormous array of raw social science data that they encounter. In spite of the extreme pressure for time, they respond by searching for applicable knowledge. I think they learn much more in this matter than is the case when they learn in order to pass a test (this) is the greatest contribution of NOVA to the student.

The changes in particular students were noted by yet another instructor. He wrote of one:

Her motivation was much better as a NOVA student than it was as a classroom student. Her intellect developed in a way that I had not anticipated was possible. Moreover, she has matured during the past year and has gained a great deal of self confidence. If there is a negative side to her experience, I would say that the experience has reinforced some of her preconceived notions about the problems with which she was involved.

I must admit that I had been skeptical of many of the features of the NOVA program. At the same time I am most enthusiastic about the impact the program has had on the students with whom I have been working.

A few weeks later, this same faculty member provided a brief addition to his statement, in which he said

I have really felt inadequate in being of great assistance to students Yet, despite this sense of inadequacy, it was stimulating and rewarding to see the growth in maturity and intellect in (students' names). In reviewing eight years in the academic world I now understand why I chose this career in the first place: I find an intellectual and personal association with students satisfying and rewarding. NOVA provided such an opportunity for the first time in several years.

The process involved in NOVA learning was believed by several teachers to be the area of greatest value. One stated his observations this way:

It was tempting to say that most of the students I have worked with learned much regarding the application of classroom academics in applied situations. But I very strongly doubt that this is true. Most of the NOVAs found only "armchair" relevance in their earlier educational experiences. I feel that a more fruitful way of assessing their learning is by contrasting acquisition of knowledge vs skills. Progress in the latter area is much more apparent. The students with whom I have had contact have all learned a great deal about relating to others in order to gain support of their co-workers for their projects and the cooperation of their clients in working out problem solutions. They have learned to separate and define concrete problems from the ambiguous demands with which most community agencies are faced. Finally, they have learned to locate and make use of community resources in solving these problems.

"There is no question as to the value of NOVA as an alternative form of education," an out-state faculty supervisor wrote. "What each student learned and achieved individually was probably more 'real', meaningful and useful than any other year spent at a university."

This professor noted, "It is difficult to evaluate a program or its effects on participants until they—and we, their supervisors—have a chance to see in retrospect what was learned and the applicability of the experience to either future academic or community work."

Both faculty and students concurred that an evaluation "in retrospect" would be valuable, so in the spring of 1973, two years after the experience, they responded to a brief evaluation form. The following summary of faculty reactions includes individual statements that have been condensed in order to provide clarity.

NOVA Faculty Follow-up, Spring, 1974

1. Why did you become involved in NOVA?

Eight persons said it was because of an existing interest in educational innovation or in the blending of "real" experiences with academic training." Four said they joined the project because de-

partment chairmen asked them to do it, or assigned them to the program.

2. In retrospect, if you had it all to do over again, would you join NOVA? Why?

Ten professors responded *yes*. Some of their reasons are

- ... the most productive educational program I've seen.
- ... interested in the university bringing skills and resources to communities where they are needed.
- ... the notion of field education through volunteer service is valid. (Two responses).
- ... "most enjoyable, frustrating, rewarding, painful and beneficial year I've spent." (Three similar responses).

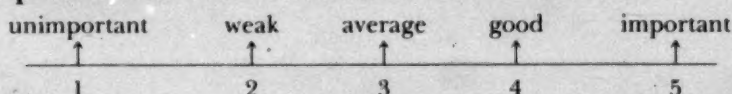
Two responses were not positive:

- ... No. Professional payoff for time spent is little. I'd much rather be involved with intern program in own field.
- ... I like the idea, but would prefer that it be limited to summers or part-time. Under these circumstances, yes; otherwise, doubtful.

3. If you were in NOVA now, would you approach the experience differently? How?

All faculty members except one indicated they would approach the assignment differently. Most indicated they would want to spend more time with students and would want to be more definitive in their expectations regarding the keeping of logs and of reading pertinent materials. Four emphasized the need to develop better contact with community supervisors.

4. Please rate NOVA as a learning experience for students in comparison with other formal education.



Eight faculty rated the experience "5"—important.

One rated it "3.5"

One rated it "4".

Two marked between 4 and 5.

The composite rating was approximately 4.75.

5. What was the most important learning you derived from NOVA?

Five responses were concerned with a new view of the slowness or the inability of the university to adapt to new programs. Typical comments:

- ... Increased understanding of the glacial slowness of change in any large organization and of insularity—interdepartment, intercollegiate, intercampus.
- ... a reevaluation of the capacity of the university to make itself meaningful to students and the state.
- ... valid concepts can be hopelessly muddled by confused logistics.

Other faculty members listed these as their own learnings.

- ... College students can thrive on responsibility. They can direct their own work and grow.
- ... learned more about the different motivations of students.
- ... learned that the traditional barriers between students and faculty can be broken, permitting significant working relationships.
- ... academic growth can be achieved without classrooms.
- ... learned how to become involved in new community with students.

6. Please list the three greatest strengths of NOVA.

Seven responses stressed the importance of combining direct experience and academic learning ("an opportunity for students to apply knowledge").

Four individuals said a major plus of the program was the opportunity it gave students to develop responsibility.

Each of the following points was cited by three professors as a "strength":

- ... opportunity for the university to interrelate with communities.
- ... fostered close student-faculty relationships.
- ... stimulated personal growth for students.

Each of the following was regarded as a program strength by two staff members:

- ... learning about various specific groups in society.
- ... the scope of opportunities available to students.
- ... college classes were made more relevant to students' perceived educational needs.
- ... NOVA reached some students that traditional programs miss.
- ... faculty learned to work in community settings.

"Strengths" listed once each are as follows:

- ... learning what community involvement in social concerns is all about.

- ... a re-learning and re-evaluation of students' personal and professional goals.
- ... NOVA's appeal to student idealism.
- ... interdisciplinary associations for faculty.
- ... financial assistance for students.
- ... improved career selection by volunteers.

7. Please list the three greatest weaknesses of NOVA.

Seven of the 12 staff members cited confusion or ambiguity caused by ACTION as one of the greatest weaknesses, and six individuals criticized the lack of support for the program by the university itself.

Problems involved with the brief preparation time and with articulating NOVA study with the regular curriculum were each listed three times, and two individuals pointed to the failure to involve more faculty in the project.

Each of the following was listed by one faculty member as a major program weakness:

- ... the "one best way syndrome" on the part of some faculty and volunteers.
- ... the small number of students in the program.
- ... limiting program emphasis to poverty-related problems.
- ... student evaluation
- ... failure to attract more good students.
- ... the program's short duration
- ... inadequate funding
- ... too little re-training of faculty for NOVA responsibilities
- ... difficulty providing sufficient supervision of students
- ... insufficient contact with campus by students
- ... danger of trauma for students in troublesome field situations
- ... large amounts of time required for faculty travel
- ... difficulty involved in developing faculty-student communication in short time.

8. Did you change educational or occupational goals because of NOVA? Explain.

Eight faculty members answered this question "NO". Two of these explained that the concept fit their existing philosophies when they joined the staff. One commented, "I do now advise more students to take internships," and another said the experience "enhanced my desire to be a good teacher."

One individual indicated he thought the question was not ap-

plicable to him, and three others answered "Yes," their goals had changed.

- ... the program "reinforced my desire to work for educational change."
- ... "... became convinced of the need for change in higher education."
- ... learned to adapt course requirements to fit specific situations and specific individuals.

9. Was your university status enhanced or diminished by your participation in NOVA? Please explain.

Eight responses were "neither." Two faculty indicated they felt they had been regarded as "outsiders" before they entered the NOVA experiment. Another qualified the "neither" by adding, "It made me seem more adventurous to others, not necessarily more capable."

One respondent felt status was both enhanced and weakened by NOVA participation, stating, "I'm rather widely known, but I fear I'm now regarded as a fringe area, radical looney by many faculty."

Another teacher was uncertain as to how he was viewed after NOVA, but noted, "The very nature of the program put faculty members, with some colleagues, in the position of being 'oddballs.'"

Only one individual responded that his status was diminished by the program. "I became more of an object of curiosity to my fellow faculty—perhaps one of those types associated with radical movements of dubious academic value."

10. Was your attitude toward your regular university responsibilities different after your NOVA experience? Explain.

Four of the twelve professors responded "no." One explained that he "was oriented to outreach programs in the first place," and another qualified his "no"—"But I am now more resigned to the fact of the university's inability to transform itself into what it *could* be in this century."

The other eight responded in the affirmative—they felt their attitudes had changed. Comments included these:

- ... "I am convinced of the need for close faculty-student relationships."
- ... "... helped me see my responsibilities in a broader way."
- ... "I have less awe (almost none) of the traditional university and of clay-footed bureaucrats."
- ... "... saw potential for reaching students otherwise missed."

- ... "... probably less rigid in my ideas of what 'education' consists of."
- ... "... less content to accept things as they are."
- ... "... the common classroom seems to be more of a drag."
- ... "... took a much more personal interest in my students."
- ... "... now require my students... to do some volunteer work."

11. Should the university continue to grant credit for programs similar to NOVA?

The response was unanimously positive. Three persons added that such programs need more careful articulation with academic departments. Four said that such programs must be flexible, with variable volunteer time commitments and many possible emphases—not just poverty.

12. What have the 11 previous questions omitted that is important to you?

Eleven of the 12 faculty members chose to comment. Their condensed statements follow:

- ... "I guess I haven't really been able to describe the intense feeling of involvement in the educational process which these experiences generated—the real feeling that what was happening was meaningful."
- ... "Would like to see a land-grant philosophy more completely articulated and implemented."
- ... "NOVA was a turning point in my thinking about education."
- ... "The university failed to understand its NOVA experience and thereby learn. There is no intent for ... meaningful change of university direction."
- ... "I became quite involved with my NOVA's lives, ideas and beliefs." This defined my own ideas more clearly."
- ... "More time was needed in faculty selection—rather than just grabbing all willing faculty volunteers. This kind of project demands special skills and interests."
- ... "I have nothing but praise for the NOVA staff and faculty."
- ... "It was a tremendous learning experience, and it leaves other jobs in a poor light."
- ... "I particularly liked the camaraderie among NOVA students, faculty and field advisors the first year." More time is needed for faculty to talk with people in communities as well as with students.

... "As an instructor, I had an opportunity for once to see the impact of an educational program on the direct development of students. One student, in particular, gained so much from the program that she will be a major asset to our society. That is a great satisfaction."

Student Volunteers: Who Were They? What Happened to Them?

The young men and women who responded to an August 1 invitation to join a September 1 program were probably not typical students. The haste and ambiguity that were part of NOVA's first year precluded much systematic measurement or analysis, but the following information can be used as part of an initial definition of the participants:

The first group of 32 students included 23 women and nine men. The second semester group was comprised of four women and seven men.

The average number of semester credit hours that had been completed by individuals entering Phase I was 65, with a range of 30 to 127. (Two students had just received bachelors' degrees.)

All volunteers except one were Nebraskans, with the one exception listing Kansas as her home state.

The average age of volunteers was slightly less than 21; the youngest was 19 and the oldest 23.

The Lincoln NOVA director described them in May, after nine months in the program:

"When they entered this year they were a wonderfully varied bunch, but I think many of them shared the following characteristics:

1. They were disenchanted with university education.
2. They wanted to be productive—in non-scholarly pursuits.
3. They were concerned about the plight of the poor, the handicapped, the maladjusted.
4. They were distrustful of "the establishment."
5. They resisted authoritarian people.
6. They were risk-takers . . . "anything is better than what I have now."

7. They had specific problems with parents, friends, etc.
8. They wanted recognition—on their own terms.
9. They were unsure of educational and career goals.

"Some of these characteristics have changed. For example, a number of NOVAs have talked to me about the need they now feel for more direct, traditional university courses. Several have registered, with a NOVA OK, for on-campus classes. Many have talked to me about the need for more course numbers that will help lead to graduation; earlier, many of these same students couldn't have cared less about what courses they had available. In short, for some, "university education" has more significance than it did previously."

Changes did occur, and most were difficult to quantify. One quantifiable factor, however, was the group's academic achievement. The grade point average for the 32 Phase I students was 2.798 (on a four point scale) when they entered the program in September, 1971. Twenty-three returned to the campus in the 1972-73 academic year (some graduated, were married, moved to another institution). These students received a group grade point average of 3.334 for the academic work they did in the year following NOVA. Thus, the overall average improved .536, approximately 17 per cent, following the NOVA experience.

Another measure indicates an altering of attitudes concerning interpersonal relationships. The FIRO-B scale was administered to twenty Phase I students, pre and post-service. (FIRO-B measures fundamental interpersonal relations orientation-behavior). The mean scores for the twenty follow. (1-9 scale; 9 is high.)

	I try to include others	I want others to include me	I try to exert control	I want to be directed controlled	I express affection	I want affection
1971	5.3	5.75	2.15	4.85	5.65	6.4
1972	4.8	4.5	2.5	4.55	4.5	4.9
Change	-.5	-1.25	.35	-.3	-1.15	-1.5

The scores on the 1971 scale (the first measurement) were higher than those attained by such professional groups as nurses and teachers except in the areas of "control." NOVAs seemed to feel a strong need to be closely involved with others and to be open and demonstrative in their interpersonal relationships. They did not, however, want to have other people telling them what to do, and they did not want to "be the boss" themselves. They were resistant to authority.

When the instrument was administered again in 1972, the "affection expressed" was very close to .05 significance. In other words, NOVAs were less open—less demanding of expressed approval or affection after a year in the field.

The pattern of responses on the other four categories, while not statistically significant, may still represent the changed preceptions of the students. In general terms, NOVA staff believed, students felt less need to be involved with or to be sought out by groups of people, and they had a slightly stronger tendency to want structure and direction in their work.

Following this comparison, one staff member wrote, "I had predicted that we would find more—not less—openness, affection, etc., but now I think we should have expected the reactions these scores suggest—idealistic kids have simply been tempered by the realities of experience."

The May 1, 1971, report that was cited earlier attempted to describe some of the less quantifiable changes faculty had observed:

Student logs and community testimonials have helped prove that NOVAs have been productive. They have raised thousands of dollars, recruited dozens of community volunteers, helped hundreds of students and handicapped people to become more self-sufficient. At the same time, they have matured in their own outlook concerning various "classes of people" . . . Most of the wide-eyed Orphan Annie awe of all things Indian, for example, has been replaced by an open, understanding attitude that acknowledges weaknesses as well as strengths in the other culture.

I guess that most NOVAs still are repelled by blatant authoritarianism, but, in many ways, they have built bridges between their clientele and "the establishment." They have learned that there is a kind of poverty establishment, too, that has its own hidden agendas, power plays, ego-trippers and bureaucracies. In coping with the various establishments, NOVAs have learned to modify their speech, dress and hair in order to communicate more effectively—more sincerely.

Volunteers are gutsy people, but some of the early risk-taking characteristic seems to have diminished in intensity. Perhaps it was inspired by a feeling of futility in the first place, I don't know. At least, the don't-give-a-damn approach to problem confrontation is not as identifiable as it was some time ago. This may be, in part, because individuals have defined for themselves—more clearly—where they are going and what they want to do next, and spur of the moment challenges aren't as attractive as they once were; they impede personal plans.

There is another kind of risk-taking, however—the kind that involves risking one's own psychic security in offering friendship, understanding, assistance to someone else. Among our forty NOVAs I have found several who have developed this capacity, together with a degree of openness not found in other groups I have observed. They have learned to accept the minuses as well as the pluses of the people with

whom they work, to open their own feelings to their associates and to themselves, to honestly, shamelessly seek help or support when they need it.

This effort at generalizing about forty individuals is dangerous . . . I'm missing important differences, I know . . . But I'll continue. I believe that the majority of our volunteers know far more about themselves now. Several have managed to work out differences with their parents . . . and they have done this by modifying their own behavior. I have yet to see significant modification by parents, by the way. NOVAs, it seems to me, are far more self-directing, independent, and outgoing than they were last fall . . . and I would guess they would rank higher in these qualities than would forty of their on-campus peers.

NOVA students' own reflections about the program may provide the best perception of how NOVA effected them. These reactions, compiled in April, 1974, may also be the most valid appraisals of the program itself.

Thirty of the 42 students who participated in the first year of NOVA (Phases I and II) completed the spring survey. Three could not be located, eight did not respond, and one had died.

NOVA Student Follow-up Survey Spring, 1974

1. Why did you become involved in NOVA?

Sixteen of the thirty respondents said they were "discouraged," "bored," "not challenged" by university classes. Seven said they wanted an opportunity to apply theory to reality, and three cited a desire to "help someone."

Two people said the income appealed to them—jobs were scarce. Another wanted to study a particular Indian culture; one person simply wanted to experience a different facet of society.

2. In retrospect, if you had it all to do over again, would you join NOVA? Why?

Twenty nine responded, "Yes"—they would join again. The thirtieth person answered, "Yes and no—I wouldn't trade the experience for anything, (but) I felt I missed some fundamental class work."

Some of the reasons for answering "yes" were

"It proved to be a turning point in my life—both personal and academic."

"Unqualified yes. All the tears and trials were worth the sharing and introspection. I learned a great deal about my naive desire for 'public service'."

"... so much was brought into a new perspective: myself, my profession, community work, relationships with people, education."

"I regard it as the highlight of my education; I learned more useful and relevant things than in all other years of college."

"It gave me self confidence. I *can* solve problems."

"It provided me with something worth committing myself to."

"... program allowed me to do almost precisely what I set out to do—it gave me direction in a career."

"... the best 'growing up' experience I think I could have had."

3. If you were in NOVA now, would you approach the experience differently? How?

Four persons indicated that they believe they would behave in more or less the same way they did. They felt they had done as well as their limited experience allowed. "We poured ourselves out, and our efforts met the community needs," one woman commented.

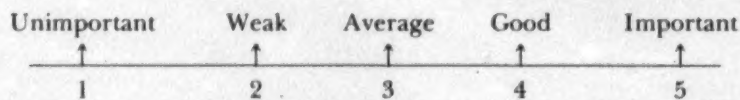
Twenty six, however, felt that they would behave differently. Fourteen asserted they would be more aggressive in their work if they "had it all to do over again." One person added, "Of course, now I would be more aggressive, but that's what was so beautiful about NOVA—it allowed me that initial experience, as meek as it might have been."

Five volunteers noted that they would be "more studious" in formal academic work.

Five others wrote that they could now be more patient, have more realistic goals, be less aggressive, or be more cautious.

Some responses to this question are only significant as they relate to individual situations. One young man, for example, wrote, "I would have gone with your suggestion of going to Grand Island" instead of insisting on a Lincoln placement that turned out to be weak. Another man, who left NOVA before his year was completed said, "I would stick it out for a year."

4. Please rate NOVA as a learning experience for you, in comparison with other formal education you have had.



Twenty-five of thirty responses were "5"—important (three individuals added their own higher rating). Three responses were "4.5," and two were "4". The average rating, then, for the thirty students was 4.88.

5. What was the most important learning you derived from NOVA?

Several students listed more than one item. All the responses are included here.

Most important learning:

- - to accept other kinds of people. (Seven responses).
- - self perception. "Have learned to deal with real problems that require understanding myself" (Four responses).
- - complexity of organizational activity, agency and interagency dynamics, organizational competition. (Three responses).
- - necessity of setting realistic goals. (Four responses).
- - changed career goals. (two responses).
- - more realistic view of slowness (lethargy) in agencies. (Two responses.)
- - complexity of social problems. (Two responses).
- - I can function in a variety of communities—"legislative, welfare, middle class, academic." (Two responses).

The following were each listed once as "most important learnings."

- - avoid weak institutions and weak administrators.
- - "what it's like to be poor."
- - to help people help themselves.
- - how to deal with power structures in organizations.
- - humility. "I wasn't as cool as I thought."
- - "Getting clean" (getting out of drugs). "Believe me, this was a learning experience."
- - increased ability to work with people.

6. Please list the three greatest strengths of NOVA.

Eleven students felt that NOVA's faculty and administrative staff ranked as one of its main strengths. "The group feeling that came out of NOVA" was emphasized by another seven.

Eleven persons also believed that a major attribute of the program was the opportunity for students to assume real responsibility. One of these specified—"the challenge it presented, the failures it allowed individuals without connecting guilt to them."

A major strength for eight was the opportunity to "get out of the classroom role." A similar response, perhaps, was listed five times: NOVA "related students to the 'real' world." Seven more listed the importance of having a "sheltered" work situation.

Six said they gained a better understanding of their own career

or educational goals; one felt he had gained a better understanding of the ways communities function.

Community-university interaction was considered a strength by two students. Simply being in a different environment was regarded as a strong feature by two.

The quality of training, the effort to match students with jobs, and the opportunity for personal growth each rated two mentions.

Three students thought the opportunity for commitment to something worthwhile was a strength, and three more cited "a chance to help someone else."

Two other points each received emphasis by three people: the commitment of federal money to the program and the opportunity to learn about resources that are available to help people.

One person underlined the importance of having an opportunity to learn how to identify with underprivileged people. One also listed as a strength, "the freedom to develop a program (educational) that meets my needs."

7. Please list the three greatest weaknesses of NOVA.

This question did not produce as much consensus as the preceding one—weaknesses appeared to be more related to specific job situations. There *were* three clusters of agreement, however. Ten students said that the largest weakness was the lack of commitment and support by the total university administration and faculty. A close runner-up with nine responses was federal red tape and restrictions. (One person listed only bureaucracy—all kinds).

The third cluster of similar responses was related to job development. Seven students said that volunteer placements needed to be better defined.

Four students criticized NOVA field supervision as being too lax or ineffective. Four agreed also that the program was weak in "Getting good information to volunteers in the field."

Other specifics:

- too few volunteers (three responses).
- training was not specific enough (three responses).
- the uncertainty of funding (Phase I) (three responses).
- needed more integration of classroom and community (three responses).
- agencies weren't well prepared to accept volunteers (two responses).
- multiple roles played by volunteers. "We were students when

it was convenient for the university; federal employees when it was convenient for the feds." (two responses).

- - community supervision was inadequate. (three responses).

- - there were too few group meetings during the year (two responses.)

- - program was limited to social welfare jobs. It needed more breadth. (two responses).

- - adapting to university routine after NOVA was difficult. (two responses).

- - volunteer selection

- - NOVAs were too isolated from one another.

- - delayed graduation.

- - needed short term and part-time options.

- - confusion about academic expectations.

- - "Sometimes students were subjected to excessive academic expectations, given the circumstances of their community work."

8. Did you change educational or occupational goals because of NOVA?

Nine students did not change goals. Most of these noted the NOVA experience strengthened their plans.

Twenty-one changed their goals in some major way as a result of their year in the field.

9. Was your university progress slowed by your participation in NOVA?

Fourteen of the thirty students surveyed indicated that their progress was impeded. Three specified that they required an additional semester in order to graduate; two needed an extra summer of on-campus work.

Two more commented that they were slowed because they had difficulty readapting to the campus, and one man said he needed the additional time to "clarify my goals." One individual pointed out that only six of the semester hours he had earned in the field were directly applicable to his degree.

10. Was your attitude toward regular university classes different after your NOVA experience? Explain.

Four persons felt their attitudes were relatively unchanged. (One added, "The new (classes) were still just a game.")

The other twenty-six students felt their views had modified. Six said they were more critical—less accepting of academic rhetoric. Four, on the other hand, saw more application and value in what happened in the classroom. Five testified that they tended to get

more involved in classes than they had before their field experience. Three said they were more energetic—they tried harder to apply theory to reality.

While one woman said she felt “unimportant—uninvolved” when she returned to the campus, another said she was “now inclined to complete the degree. I wasn’t before.”

Two persons were “much more aggressive—willing to challenge instructors,” and one felt he had more to contribute to classes.

Opinions varied widely, but the majority seemed to concur with the volunteer who said, “I appreciated the academic world much more. I began to realize that the world of stodgy professors and dusty books had much to offer, especially after I had some degree of experience to augment it.”

11. When you returned to the campus (after NOVA) did you receive better grades? Worse grades? Please explain if there was a change.

Twenty said their grades were better, eight said grades were “about the same,” and two had graduated. (The overall average of work done after NOVA, as noted earlier, was one-half grade level higher than the cumulative average achieved before NOVA.)

Nine people attributed their improved performance to better defined goals. Others cited an improved ability to work efficiently, to more maturity or to a deepened ability to relate to the subject matter.

12. What have the 11 previous questions omitted that is important to you? Please comment about whatever you deem important.

Twenty six students chose to add their own remarks. Several of those statements, which follow, have been shortened considerably.

—“Little is said about what NOVA did for the state, but there are 23 grade schoolers in Santee who could tell you about what (two NOVAs) did while working on the reservation for a year. Some retarded adults and children in western Nebraska could tell you how NOVA volunteers made changes in their lives.” . . . the volunteers “know where they are headed in life because of NOVA, and that is a rare thing among students these days. To editorialize a bit—the fact that NOVA is dying means that the university has lost a valuable resource for educating students to work on today’s problems.”

-- “A very important aspect of NOVA was that it dealt with us as whole people, whereas the classrooms dealt with us, usually, only as students.”

-- “I mentioned the NOVA network. This . . . group includes

NOVA staffers (director, assistant director, secretaries), fellow NOVA students, community persons. All are bound in a brotherhood of sorts."

- - "Council Bluffs (schools) called me . . . and I was invited to come for an interview. I know I wouldn't have gotten the job if it hadn't been for my experience in NOVA. (They had 30 people apply for the job)."

- - "I still love our fearless leaders."

- - "I am still searching for answers to questions learned from my NOVA experience. I am thankful for having been shown the questions. I don't know if everyone goes through a jolt in life, but I know I have and it was NOVA."

- - "My community supervisor was more of a hindrance than help to learning."

- - "My faculty supervisor (name) was so very supportive and helpful."

- - "The original staff had a sincere and personal involvement with the students of NOVA which gave the unity to the program which we all needed."

- - "NOVA was a personal benefit which gave me a chance to begin to establish the individual identity which so many students seem to want and need. It was a very good feeling to know that (staff) were behind each and every one of us in all of our problems, achievements and experiences. your patience and sincere interest made the difference between a group of floundering college social workers and a group of growing and learning young adults."

- - "My time and experiences in NOVA have made it possible for me to get the job I now have. It put me in front of the 30 other people who applied for the position."

- - "I was saddened when NOVA . . . narrowed its scope. NOVA is a good idea, but, like good people, I wonder if there is really a place for it."

- - "I think *all* teachers should spend two out of every five or six years working in a field other than teaching. This will help them keep coursework realistic. They, many times, use outdated materials which are of little use in the field."

- - "NOVA gave us all a chance to find ourselves—to get away from the sheltered environment and see a whole new aspect of life which some of us had never imagined existed. There was a bond formed between each and every one of us involved in the NOVA experience."

--"Because of NOVA I got good references and this helped me get an internship (which is relatively difficult to get these days)."

--"NOVA probably changed my life in more ways than anything up to that point. I really hate to see it terminated."

--"Because, I believe, of the unifying effect of the commitment and concern evinced by (NOVA staff members), a number of NOVAs . . . have been united in a bond of friendship which has been an unexpected and lasting pleasure and benefit to me . . . I hope that, although NOVA is coming to a formal end, other programs will be developed which can provide this kind of educational opportunity. . . . I feel lucky to have been a NOVA and hope that other students can someday have the opportunity to participate in well-financed and soundly structured programs of the same kind."

--"NOVA gave me an opportunity to develop close relationships outside the narrow range of my past. It gave me the confidence to speak up at times. I found it to be the most influential experience I have had... ."

--"For me, NOVA was a time when I became close to professors, which was one of the first times during school. (Faculty) were all very concerned about me as an individual, and I liked that."

--"I feel I have met very important people in my life through NOVA and also lost a few of my friends through differences. I feel more aware of community and community needs. I look at students now as being very naive and unaware except in an academic sense."

--"NOVA was important because I met and was helped by truly beautiful people during a very confusing time in my life."

--"NOVA has been a bond of love, friendship and understanding—many wonderful people and many frustrating times—but it is, most importantly, a part of each of us who took a year to enrich our lives."

--"I hope to God everyone . . . gets a second chance to live again as I did through NOVA. . . . Today I am reaching out, seeing this beautiful universe as never before. I guess, by getting clean (giving up drugs) in NOVA I have learned to love life—something I never knew before."

--"NOVA, when I was in, was a close group, and I felt a personal relationship with (faculty) because they took an active interest in what I was doing. I feel that, for me, that year has been the most profitable of my college career."

Conclusions and Recommendations

At the close of the first year of NOVA, all Nebraska community agencies sponsoring volunteers requested that students be assigned to them again the following year. Students and NOVA faculty were also unanimous in their opinion that the University should continue to develop and support NOVA-like programs.

Despite these positive assessments, however, it was apparent to many participants that the program's survival was unlikely, and the announcement that NOVA would be terminated June 30, 1974, came as no surprise.

NOVA was an experiment. Despite its brief duration, the experience gained can serve as a useful resource for future efforts—at the University of Nebraska or elsewhere.

In a letter to Nebraska's three campus chancellors (September 6, 1972) President D. B. Varner affirmed:

Our real interest in this program from the beginning was not so much to be affiliated with a Washington based agency, but rather to explore some alternatives which might have longer term value for the University. I continue to believe there are some interesting possibilities in this format and because of this I have asked Gene Harding, who pioneered this project from the beginning, to share with us his notions about what might be developed on a more permanent basis within the University . . .

The analysis and recommendations that resulted from that letter were a combination of conclusions from the one-year NOVA experiment and from the Ford Foundation's Task Force *Report on Higher Education*, 1971. (U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare. Catalog No. HE 5.250:50065). The quoted material that follows consists of extractions from the Task Force report, chosen because they are particularly pertinent to the NOVA experience.

"It is not enough to improve and expand the present system. The needs of society and the diversity of students now entering college require a fresh look at what 'going to college' means." (pg vii).

"... we have seen disturbing trends toward uniformity in our institutions, growing bureaucracies, overemphasis on academic credentials, isolation of students and faculty from the world—a growing rigidity of structure that makes higher education reflect less and less the interests of society." (pg 1).

(Students) "unprepared to make sound career choices ... undertake years of graduate training in a particular field only to find they aren't sure why they've done it, or if it is really what they want for a career." (pg 5).

"The evidence we have of the returning GIs of World War II and, in recent years, of Peace Corps volunteers, indicates that sense of purpose, enjoyment of studies, appreciation of their relevance and ability to make career choices all improve with off-campus experience." (pg 7).

"... faculties assume that their students will learn best the way they themselves learned best—by sitting in class, listening to professors and reading books. ... All too infrequently is an undergraduate course organized or taught on the assumption that students might learn best through subjective or practical experiences" (pg 19).

"We often lose sight of the enormous amount of teaching and learning that goes on outside our colleges ... The system of higher education tends to quarantine ... innovative models so that, once started, they rarely spread." (pg 21).

"The more substantial the difference between the new idea and the conventional practice, the more difficult it is for that new idea to survive in a large bureaucracy. Rather than innovation, the skill of the large system lies in more of the same. Entrepreneurs rarely thrive in a climate of detailed budget review, pressures for equal treatment, statewide interest groups, flagship campus dominance or concern for political expediency." (pg 27).

"We doubt whether many students have had sufficient exposure outside the educational system to know what a relevant education might be. Both students and faculty need more experience away from the campus." (pg 61).

"there is a tendency for existing institutions to co-opt any really different approach, gradually imposing constraints that restore a condition of sameness." (pg 63).

"Most innovation in higher education—as in other walks of life—will spring up from within and from below because some determined and imaginative individual has committed himself to a new idea." (pg 66).

Re federally related programs: "We believe such programs have inherent difficulties: There is a basic conflict as to whether the program is to help the volunteer or the target group. There is a question whether the program should attract students from selective or non-selective institutions—those socially motivated from the middle class or those job hungry from the less advantaged. As national programs age, they become bureaucratic and less appealing to the young. Volunteers, particularly in social problem-solving programs, want to engage in political action, which agencies want to avoid. ... Therefore, we recommend that efforts to expand ... be directed away from large, federally run programs. ..." (pg 75-76).

Re faculty: "Whereas the need is for individuals of broad experience and ability, those in faculty positions are increasingly PhD's, oriented toward scholarship, not teaching; toward departments and disciplines, not the choices students face; toward theory and explanation, not concrete problem solving. . . . Young faculty (who want to gain field experience) dare not—older faculty, who can, no longer wish to. . . . The chief obstacle to enriching the non-academic experience among faculty will be the resistance of the current generation of faculty members. Moves in this direction will violate some of their deepest convictions. They have fought hard for the advantages and standards of professionalism from the beginning of their own graduate training." (pg 77).

"We therefore recommend the creation of professional institutes devoted to human service . . . Most significantly, their success will depend on genuine integration of theory and practice which can best be achieved by work-study arrangements." (pg 84).

The foregoing excerpts from the *Report on Higher Education* are dramatically congruent with views held by Nebraska's first NOVA staff. In addition to these points, NOVA faculty strongly recommend that several other suggestions be considered by planners of future field study programs:

1. It is important that such programs have some specific focus. NOVA's emphasis was service to the low-income population. At Green Bay the mission is environment. New York has a College for Human Services. At any rate, this single, unifying element is essential. It helps create the important feeling of mission—of commitment, with others, to something worthwhile—that several volunteers deemed a major strength of NOVA. It also dominates the shaping of the curriculum, including the selection of courses to be offered.

2. Experiential programs should be staffed by an interdisciplinary faculty working as teams, not as mini-departments. Programs must have excellent professors, not left-overs. The staff should include faculty whose background includes significant experience outside academia as well as inside—people whose past performance indicates that they can function in problem solving situations. There should be strong evidence that they are capable of listening to community people and to students—listening a lot. They should be full time. In addition to the professorial staff, "outside" practitioners should be recruited and should be considered legitimate part-time staff.

3. In view of the slow evolution of new collegiate formats, it may be wise to incorporate some regular, non-traditional instruction into the experiential program. Many faculty, as the Ford Foundation Report indicates, find it difficult to believe that significant learning can occur completely outside traditional definitions, and unless

there is faculty support, new programs will invariably fail. Therefore, classes, workshops and seminars should be part of the package.

4. It could be advantageous for students to live in or adjacent to a field experience center. The shared living-learning approach creates additional opportunities for evening and weekend instruction and provides constant opportunity for students to share their learnings and to reinforce one another.

5. In many ways, experiential programs can function more effectively away from the home campus. Students should be able to immerse themselves in this action-oriented kind of learning without the requirement—or the luxury—of returning regularly to the institutional womb. If this notion is valid, it follows that such programs can be established wherever enough need exists for specific services (field work), where there is a roof to cover group learning activities, and where there is sufficient housing for students and faculty.

6. There may be good reasons for admitting younger university students into experiential programs: Sophomores, for example, often seek concrete experience to help them determine which of the various service fields they want to enter; they have had no previous experience from which to make a decision.

7. Time commitments for field experience should vary, depending upon the nature of the assignment. Programmers should know that experiences that are too short can produce terribly inaccurate perceptions of the community served and of the student's own potential. Experiences that are too long can become unproductive bores.

8. Experiential programs—or any experimental program, for that matter, should never be initiated without adequate planning time, appropriate staff preparation and, at least, nominal support from the faculty as a whole. These are basics.

* * * * *

The most significant outcome of NOVA, for me, is a new realization of the strength, resourcefulness and ability of university students. Academicians have typically not expected enough from students. We have not trusted them with real responsibilities—and we have been denied the deep satisfaction that comes from seeing young people attain real achievement, at the same time fitting their learnings into their own personal lives. This internalization of their experience by NOVA volunteers was thrilling and, even now, not completely measureable.

NOVA has not been a failure, even though it is ending. It has made lasting differences in the thinking of a small group of fine young people, a few aggressive faculty and several hundred Nebraska citizens.

I'm glad I've been here.

Gene Harding